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## **C**IVIL DEFENSE, 1956

by

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## CIVIL DEFENSE, 1956

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**R**EADINESS of the people of the United States to withstand an enemy nuclear attack is to be tested more extensively than ever before, from July 20 to 26, by Operation Alert 1956—the country's third annual civil defense training exercise.<sup>1</sup> In view of widespread uneasiness over the progress and effectiveness of preparations to hold down deaths and injuries if bombs or missiles start falling, there is keen interest to see what advances have been made in civil defense planning since last year's Operation Alert. That test "clearly exposed the nation's unreadiness to cope with a thermonuclear attack."<sup>2</sup>

President Eisenhower, who took a leading part in the 1955 exercise, is scheduled to be in Panama during the opening days of this year's alert. However, the participants will include—in addition to federal, state, and local civil defense personnel—cabinet officers, numerous other top-level federal officials, thousands of employees from more than 30 agencies of the federal government, and sections of the general public in some communities. In the course of a five-hour mock raid 63 population centers, nine Air Force bases, and four Atomic Energy Commission installations are to be "hit" by 139 plane-dropped and submarine-launched "explosives" ranging in force from 20 kilotons to five megatons.<sup>3</sup> More than one-third of the "bombs" are to be in the megaton range, and about two-thirds of the "detonations" are to be made at ground level in order to test the ability of civil defense workers to deal with problems created by radioactive fallout.

<sup>1</sup> The first exercise, participated in by 54 cities, took place June 14, 1954. The second exercise, featuring evacuation of Washington by President Eisenhower and 15,000 federal employees, covered about 60 cities and extended over the three-day period June 15-17, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Civil Defense Administrator Val Peterson, testimony before House Government Operations subcommittee, Apr. 17, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> One kiloton equals 1,000 tons of T.N.T. equivalent; one megaton equals one million tons. In last year's exercise 61 "hits" on 60 cities by "bombs" of comparable force resulted in the "death" of 8¼ million persons the first day and of 8 million additional persons within six weeks; 25 million were rendered "homeless."—Federal Civil Defense Administration, *Report on Operation Alert 1955* (mimeo., Jan. 4, 1956), pp. 2-3.

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The civil defense program has come in for steady criticism ever since it got under way half a dozen years ago. Its shortcomings and the problems involved received a new and thorough airing this year at hearings before a House Government Operations subcommittee, headed by Rep. Chet Holifield (D-Cal.), which began in January and continued until the end of June. In the course of the hearings Willard Bascom, civil defense adviser to the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, asserted that the United States had no national civil defense policy. Maj. Gen. Otto L. Nelson, Jr. (ret.), chairman of a committee of experts appointed to review Project East River,<sup>4</sup> declared that the present program was "so ineffective and fragmentary that it is worse than no program at all."

At the final hearings late in June, Gov. W. Averell Harriman of New York attributed lack of an effective national program, and consequent frustration of state and local civil defense workers, to failure of the Eisenhower administration to give the necessary national leadership. Mayor Frank P. Zeidler of Milwaukee, chairman of the American Municipal Association's civil defense committee, blamed a complacent population as well as elected officials who think the public does not want to be disturbed by reminders of the horrors of nuclear warfare. Chairman Holifield said on the House floor, Apr. 30: "No adequate . . . program . . . for orderly evacuation of target-area populations to shelters or safe distances . . . [or for] shelter [of] the 56 million people in our largest 33 metropolitan areas . . . is in existence in our nation today."

#### LACK OF AGREEMENT ON THE ROLE OF MARTIAL LAW

One of the matters on which the Holifield subcommittee sought clarification—and one on which Operation Alert may shed light—is the role that martial law should occupy in civil defense. President Eisenhower instructed Attorney General Brownell a year ago to make a study of that question. He said at a news conference on July 6, 1955, that he wanted the Attorney General to determine what type of action "would do the least violence to our form of government . . . [and] would be the best thing to do under

<sup>4</sup> Project East River was a broad study of civil defense carried out in 1952 by Associated Universities, Inc. for a group of federal agencies. The review, made last year for the Federal Civil Defense Administration, the Office of Defense Mobilization, and the Defense Department, led to the conclusion that "The nation's preparations and progress in non-military defense are still far from what they should be."

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such circumstances." Brownell declined to appear before the subcommittee; he indicated that the martial law study had not been completed.

The question was raised by the President's mock declaration of "limited martial law" during last year's Operation Alert. Eisenhower declared on that occasion that martial law would remain in effect, subject to certain limitations,<sup>5</sup> until civilian authority and control could be restored. The proclamation came as a surprise. Federal Civil Defense Administrator Val Peterson told a Senate Armed Services subcommittee shortly afterward that he "knew it was a possibility but . . . had no way of knowing what decision the President . . . would make." At the July 6, 1955, news conference Eisenhower explained the reasoning behind his action.

The problem I was confronted with when I left my office [was this]: I was suddenly told that 53 . . . major cities . . . had . . . been destroyed or so badly damaged that the populations were fleeing; there were uncounted dead; there was great fallout over the country; . . . there was, . . . as I saw it, no recourse except to take charge instantly, because even Congress, dispersed from Washington because of a bomb, would take some hours to meet.

In view of the fact that martial law never has been invoked on a national basis, the President's mock declaration led to widespread comment. Some public leaders called it an alien and dangerous expedient. Others feared that local government officials and the general public would be encouraged to believe that they would be relieved of civil defense responsibilities by the military.

#### ARMED FORCES AND CIVIL DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITIES

Administrator Peterson said later that "The idea of the declaration . . . was not that the military take over the country . . . but rather that . . . [their] resources . . . be made available to civilian authorities."<sup>6</sup> Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Army Chief of Staff, testified before the House

<sup>5</sup> Army commanders were to carry out decisions of federal civilian agencies; conduct of elections was not to be affected; civilian courts were to continue functioning where the war effort was not involved; the writ of habeas corpus was to be suspended only with respect to federal offenses.

Charles Fairman of the Harvard Law School suggested to the House subcommittee, Feb. 21, 1956, that the limitations may have been ordered for the following reasons: "Civil defense had been declared a state and local matter [by the Federal Civil Defense Act]. Our Constitution vests in the President no powers to direct the state governments. So . . . I suppose . . . the Attorney General hit upon 'limited martial law' as a device whereby the gap between the national and state governments could be bridged."

<sup>6</sup> On C.B.S. television program, Feb. 5, 1956.

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subcommittee on Mar. 1 that if civilian resources were overwhelmed by an enemy attack, the Army would make available to civil defense authorities the personnel, materiel, and installations not required for military operations. While admitting that all Army officers on active duty were to receive instruction in martial law, Taylor protested:

I am not responsible for civil defense, I don't want to be responsible for civil defense, and if the Army had to take over any role of this sort, every additional function would have to be paid for in terms of new men and new dollars . . . The Army is always prepared to execute martial law if directed by the Commander in Chief. We have very little enthusiasm for doing that. We do it only because we are told by responsible civilian leaders . . . I would feel that martial law should be used only as a last resort when civilian authority cannot do the job.

After other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been questioned by the subcommittee, Chairman Holifield told the House on Apr. 30: "They had not anticipated . . . [the] declaration of martial law, they had made no preparations for it, and since that time they have not built up a military organization capable of taking over the civil defense responsibilities of the nation." According to Holifield, the service chiefs maintained that they could not take on full-time civil defense duties without impairing their primary military missions.

In some quarters, however, it has been contended that civil defense against nuclear attack is a job for highly trained military units rather than amateurs and volunteers. The British government, for example, embarked a year ago on a project to create, as a separate branch of the Army, a Mobile Defense Corps of 48 battalions staffed by experts in nuclear survival. Because an H-bomb, dropped on a populous center, probably would kill many or most of the local civilian defense workers, the M.D.C. battalions, each made up of 600 men, are to be dispersed around the country and made ready to move quickly into a bombed city with all the paraphernalia needed to measure the extent of radioactivity, protect themselves, and aid survivors. Although no such plan has yet been given serious consideration in this country, bills have been introduced in Congress to put the Federal Civil Defense Administration into the Defense Department as an equal of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

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## Civil Defense Attainments and Shortcomings

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THE FEDERAL Civil Defense Act of 1950 vested primary responsibility for civil defense in the states and their political subdivisions and limited the responsibility of the national government to providing coordination, guidance, and assistance. To carry out the purposes of the act, the Federal Civil Defense Administration was authorized to do, among other things, the following: Distribute grants of matching funds to the states; train civil defense leaders; develop designs and standards for shelters and other equipment and facilities; stockpile emergency supplies; establish civil defense communication and warning systems; and make additional civil defense preparations.

### GROUNDWORK AT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

Not even the staunchest champions of the present program contend that an adequate level of civilian preparedness has been achieved, but they maintain that at least a solid foundation has been laid. Administrator Peterson told the Holifield subcommittee last Apr. 17 that charges that the country has no civil defense should be "summarily rejected."

This is not to imply that civil defense is adequate. Far from it . . . [But] the plain fact is that national civil defense exists. It did not exist five years ago. There is scarcely a city, county, or hamlet which does not have a civil defense director. All states now have civil defense laws and organizations. . . .

Together . . . [federal, state, and local civil defense workers] have acquired an operational capability; they have established an emergency communications system that reaches every part of America; they have installed the main elements of an attack warning system, working in close cooperation with the Air Force; they have stockpiled appreciable amounts of emergency supplies; and they have alerted a large part of the American public to the nature of the dangers we face and to the need for taking steps to survive these dangers.

The federal government appropriated for civil defense activities in the six years ended June 30, 1956, a total of around \$316.3 million. More than \$73.5 million of the total was made available for grants in aid to the states to develop and equip such state and local services as attack warning, communications, welfare, training and education, health and special weapons defense, rescue, and engineering.

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In addition to matching funds and annual appropriations, the states have set aside some \$100 million in emergency funds for use only if the United States is actually attacked. Federal grants are being matched increasingly by local rather than state governments. According to a recent Census Bureau report, the nation's 41 largest cities spent \$7.4 million for civil defense in the year ended Dec. 31, 1955, as compared with \$6.4 million in 1954 and \$5.3 million in 1953.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF A CIVIL DEFENSE WARNING SYSTEM

To give warning of enemy attack to the general public, F.C.D.A. has set up a network of telephone lines known as the Civil Air Defense Warning (CADW) system. F.C.D.A. attack warning officers, on 24-hour watch at each of the country's 16 Air Defense divisions, and F.C.D.A. liaison officers at the headquarters of the Continental Air Defense Command and the Eastern, Central, and Western Air Defense Forces transmit warnings received from the Air Force to approximately 200 strategically located warning centers.

The state and local civil defense personnel who man those key points then alert some 3,500 subsidiary and local centers, generally situated in such places as police and fire stations, which in turn sound the public warning devices. Administrator Peterson informed the House subcommittee in April that changes in the telephone circuits of the CADW, and relocation of warning centers, had reduced to less than eight minutes the time required to transmit a warning to all key points.

Facilities used to relay messages from central to subsidiary centers belong to state and local warning systems; F.C.D.A. provides matching funds to purchase or install equipment but not to operate it. State and local authorities recently have given priority to development of warning and communications systems. According to F.C.D.A., all except 29 of 262 designated principal cities in target areas had warning systems by the end of 1955.

Within recent months F.C.D.A. has installed a telephone network which connects its attack warning and liaison officers, seven regional offices, and emergency operations centers with national headquarters at Battle Creek, Mich.,



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and the administrator's office in Washington. To assure continuity of operation in an emergency, a private-line alternate teletypewriter and telephone system links Battle Creek headquarters with F.C.D.A.'s national emergency headquarters near Washington and its seven regional offices.

#### GAPS IN THE RADIOLOGICAL DEFENSE PROGRAMS

To guard against dangers of radioactive fallout, the Federal Civil Defense Administration has intensified its radiological defense program. During the past year it set up a separate division to handle that work and improved its coordination with the Atomic Energy Commission. A daily national fallout forecast, which originally covered only the 70 most critical target areas, was expanded in February to cover the entire United States, Alaska, and Hawaii.<sup>7</sup>

Procurement of radiological survey meters and dosimeters for the F.C.D.A. stockpiling program, under which medical and engineering supplies are stored near probable target areas, also has been stepped up. However, by last April only 28,000 of the 225,000 survey meters needed, and only 95,000 of the required one million dosimeters, had been delivered.<sup>8</sup>

Approximately 19,000 civil defense workers have been trained as radiological monitors and monitor leaders. But Ralph E. Lapp, a consultant on radioactivity, told the Hollifield subcommittee, Mar. 20, that it was his impression that fallout was "pretty much of an unknown quantity to local civil defense forces."

#### CHANGES IN SHELTER AND EVACUATION ADVICE

Current civil defense plans to make use of both shelter and evacuation—shielding and space—as protective measures in event of nuclear attack represent the latest stage in the evolution of F.C.D.A. thinking. When the agency was established in 1951, civil defense planners anticipated little or no warning of an attack and assumed that com-

<sup>7</sup> The Weather Bureau transmits the forecasts, based on information from 52 radar wind observatories, by teletype to nearly 500 Weather Bureau, Civil Aeronautics Administration, and military installations, which relay them on request to state and local civil defense offices.

<sup>8</sup> Ratios of other stockpiled supplies delivered by the end of last year ranged from 4 per cent of the materials required for 5,000 civil defense emergency hospitals to 94 per cent of the required paper blankets. Nearly \$168 million had been obligated for stockpiling by Dec. 31, 1955.

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paratively low-yield atomic bombs, like the 20-kiloton Hiroshima model, would be used. They therefore advised shelter as the best protection; the simple rule was "duck and take cover."

After the first thermonuclear (hydrogen) device, capable of causing total destruction in an area six miles wide, was tested in the Pacific in November 1952, it became apparent that shelter anywhere near the detonation point would not provide protection.<sup>9</sup> Plans were approved at about that time to expand the warning system to increase advance notice of an attack from a few minutes to one or two hours. Consequently, civil defense planning was re-oriented to recognize the desirability of evacuation, and the rule of thumb became "evacuate and survive." The shelter concept was not abandoned, however, because "some people would always remain in target areas, and . . . longer warning time was considered to be a probability and not a certainty."<sup>10</sup>

After the test of another thermonuclear device at Eniwetok in March 1954, civil defense planners were confronted by the prospect of having to contend with radioactive fallout. A.E.C. Chairman Strauss announced, Feb. 15, 1955, nearly a year later, that the 1954 explosion had "so contaminated" 7,000 square miles of territory that survival "might have depended upon prompt evacuation . . . or . . . taking shelter and other protective measures." Accordingly it was necessary to adopt the present civil defense concept. "The common sense answer," said Administrator Peterson, "appears to be evacuation, in combination with . . . shelter"—evacuation to escape blast, heat, and initial radiation in the immediate target area; shelter, to escape fallout beyond that area.<sup>11</sup>

Although the rapid and startling changes in weapons have necessitated changes in the plans for civil defense,

<sup>9</sup> "When we saw what happens with the explosion of one of those weapons, . . . the duck-and-take-cover-concept, . . . the stay-at-your-lathe concept of World War II, upon which civil defense was built, . . . was done. That's when I began toying with this idea of evacuation."—Administrator Peterson in copyrighted interview in *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 8, 1955, pp. 73-74.

<sup>10</sup> F.C.D.A., *The National Plan for Civil Defense Against Enemy Attack* (1956), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Testimony before House Government Operations subcommittee, Apr. 17, 1956. When Peterson appeared before the subcommittee again on May 19, he conceded that the "constantly increasing" threat of the intercontinental ballistic missile, which will shorten the possible warning time to a matter of minutes, "greatly impaired" the evacuation concept. As the ICBM threat draws closer, he said, "We will have no choice other than to rely upon shelter for . . . protection."

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they have not obviated the need for either evacuation or shelter. Protective measures that may save some lives cannot be written off because they may not save all lives. Admittedly, shelter is not likely to be effective within a few miles of ground zero, but even there, getting into a ditch, behind a wall, or into a basement may save one's life.

If there should be no warning, or insufficient warning to permit evacuation, any shelter is better than none, and outside the immediate target area shelter would provide protection from fallout. An old-fashioned cyclone cellar topped with three feet of earth and equipped with filter devices is considered good protection against fallout. Even "elementary shielding procedures," A.E.C. Commissioner Willard F. Libby advised the House subcommittee, Jan. 31, will lessen the damage caused by the fireball in outlying regions. "People should be told that it does pay to dodge and . . . try to get behind shelter," he added.

#### FAILURE TO MAKE PROGRESS ON SHELTER PROGRAMS

Despite the supposed value of shelter, no national program to construct public or family shelters has been undertaken. Shelter programs in most cities have been limited to surveying and marking existing buildings and underground facilities for use in emergencies. F.C.D.A. engineers have designed and tested both public and family shelters, but lack of funds has prevented extension of aid to local governments or to individuals to build such structures. The agency asked \$250 million for that purpose in each of the fiscal years 1951, 1952, and 1953, but Congress turned it down consistently. As a result, F.C.D.A. gave up seeking funds for shelters and tried, without much success, to "sell the program on a do-it-yourself and pay-for-it-yourself basis."<sup>12</sup>

While advocating light shelters outside target areas to protect evacuees from fallout,<sup>13</sup> Administrator Peterson formerly questioned the feasibility of deep public shelters within immediate target areas from the standpoint of both protection and cost. However, he told the House subcom-

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin C. Taylor, acting director, engineering office, F.C.D.A., testifying before House Government Operations subcommittee, Apr. 19, 1956. The State of New York has appropriated \$26 million to be spent on shelters, but only if the federal government grants an equal amount.

<sup>13</sup> Possible means of providing refuge from fallout, suggested at one time or another, have included digging trenches or installing reinforced-concrete conduits along main highways.

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mittee on Apr. 17 that shelters which would be highly effective, even within an area near where a bomb hit, had now been designed and tested. Although the cost was "still quite high," Peterson was hopeful that equivalent protection could be given by less expensive designs currently under consideration. Accordingly, he added, "Now we believe that a sound shelter program is possible and at a cost which this nation can afford."<sup>14</sup> Chairman Holifield said on June 19 that he was sure the subcommittee would recommend that federal authorities institute a program for radiation-proof shelters.

F.C.D.A. has consistently encouraged householders to build reinforced-concrete, earth-covered shelters in back yards. Such shelters are estimated to cost about \$1,000. Peterson said in April that his agency was making "substantial progress" in designing shelters, for incorporation into new houses, that would afford greater protection than present shelters and be financially "acceptable."

#### EVACUATION TESTS; GAPS IN EVACUATION PLANNING

Civil defense authorities maintain that studies and tests have shown that, given sufficient time, evacuation is feasible, and that where tried it has worked better than expected. A Milwaukee study indicated that 600,000 persons—almost the entire downtown population—could be removed to safety in two hours. In such cities as Mobile, Philadelphia, and Spokane persons have been evacuated from the central business districts to designated outlying loading points in periods ranging from 12 to 20 minutes.<sup>15</sup> More than three score evacuation exercises were conducted in American cities in 1954 and 1955.

Even if urban dwellers can be evacuated from cities before the bombs fall, they must still have a place to go where they can find food and shelter. Much less has been done to prepare for care of evacuees after arrival at reception areas than to prepare for the evacuation itself. F.C.D.A.'s report on last year's Operation Alert conceded that "In both the actual and simulated evacuations, emphasis was on the mere movement of persons from one

<sup>14</sup> Estimated costs of various types of public shelters had ranged from \$70 to \$150 a person, with the total for a national shelter program put at from \$8 billion to \$18 billion.

<sup>15</sup> A daily "evacuation" takes place in large cities as the working population goes home. More than 800,000 persons move out of the Chicago "Loop" in about two hours, and some two million leave Manhattan during a like period.

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place to another, with little recognition given to the need for lodging, feeding, and otherwise caring for them in reception areas."

Local civil defense organizations are responsible for providing food, clothing, housing, and other essentials to persons in need as the result of an enemy attack, but the federal government would turn over any supplies it could spare. F.C.D.A. already has delegated to the Agriculture Department the responsibility for holding adequate emergency food supplies in readiness. The federal government also offers matching funds for procurement of such welfare items as blankets, food containers, and portable stoves, but up to the end of last year it had obligated only about \$255,000 for that purpose.

It is expected that evacuees from metropolitan centers would go to communities outside the target areas and be housed in such places as schools, churches, homes, and barns, but only a comparatively few exercises have been held to test the ability of surrounding areas to receive and care for the refugees.<sup>16</sup> In one such exercise, in December 1954, farm families in Weld County, Colo., cared for and fed some 800 Denver residents. In drills elsewhere, evacuees have been removed to neighboring towns or taken to other specific reception areas. Some cities, however, have published interim evacuation plans which refer to assembly points in reception areas without designating those points.

To enable target cities and reception areas to develop detailed evacuation, shelter, and welfare plans, Congress a year ago gave F.C.D.A. a supplemental appropriation of \$10 million to finance so-called survival plan studies. By the end of March 1956 the agency had entered into agreements for 20 such studies and had under consideration agreements for an additional score. Surveys to obtain basic information, and then the development of operational plans based on that information, are to be carried out by the local communities in accordance with standards and specifications laid down by F.C.D.A. Planning in some cases is to be on a single-city basis, in others on a state-wide basis, and in still others on a target-complex basis.

<sup>16</sup> F.C.D.A.'s annual report for 1955, recently released, noted that plans to provide welfare services "went forward substantially . . . in some, but not all, states and localities" during the year, but that authorities generally were holding off "firm operational plans" pending completion of the survival plan studies now in progress.

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Completion and testing of any one survival plan is expected to take from one to two years, depending on size of the area involved and the complexity of attendant problems. Administrator Peterson told the House subcommittee last April that when these projects have been carried through, "City and state civil defense people will have, as the result of federal financing and guidance, operational plans tailored to their individual circumstances." He added that the plans would "reflect the optimum combination of evacuation and shelter" and provide for "reception, feeding, housing, and related welfare needs."

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### **Obstacles to Effective Civil Defense**

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THE THREE great obstacles to effective civil defense, according to Rep. Holifield, are "public apathy, congressional indifference, and bureaucratic inertia." Elaborating on that theme during the hearing on Mar. 14, Holifield observed: "We are faced with a lack of comprehension on the part of the people . . . [as to] the seriousness of the need . . . [for an] effective civil defense, . . . with an indifference . . . on the part of . . . Congress [as to the need] to grapple with this problem, . . . and . . . with the lack of . . . top-level leadership. We have not yet had the President, either Mr. Truman or Mr. Eisenhower, go on . . . television and tell the people what the relative gravity of the civil defense problem is."

The committee which reviewed Project East River found that, despite efforts of federal, state, and local civil defense agencies, the general public was as "disinterested in 1955 as in 1952." Recent relaxation of international tensions has made it still harder to arouse public interest.

#### **INTERACTION OF PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL APATHY**

Many observers assert that the lack of concern about civilian preparedness, manifested by both the public and Congress, has assumed the nature of a vicious circle. The public, inadequately informed, has not been able to understand the problems involved and therefore has shown little interest in and made no demand for a really effective program. Because there has been no public demand, Congress

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has not appropriated enough money for more than a limited effort; and because Congress has supported only a restricted program, most people have assumed that civil defense does not warrant their concern.

Critics of the attitude of Congress have pointed out that the public hardly can be expected to worry about civil defense when Congress itself does not bother to participate in drills or provide for its own protection in case of attack, and when it appropriates far less for civil defense in the nation's capital than it appropriates for the national zoo.<sup>17</sup> It has been asserted, on the other hand, that Congress has felt that the civil defense programs it has been asked to approve were inadequately prepared. It has been inclined to look on civil defense as something of a "boondoggle" and appropriations for it as easily susceptible to reduction.

#### FEDERAL CIVIL DEFENSE BUDGET CUTS

<i>Fiscal year</i>	<i>Requested by President</i>	<i>Appropriated by Congress</i>
1951	\$403,000,000	\$33,581,000
1952	535,000,000	75,310,000
1953	600,000,000	43,000,000
1954	125,200,000	46,525,000
1955	85,750,000	49,325,000
1956	71,300,000	68,600,000
1957	123,200,000	93,560,000

Public apathy about civil defense undoubtedly results in part from a feeling that it is hopeless to seek adequate protection against nuclear weapons of the present, much less of the future. A description of the public's attitude offered by Administrator Peterson nearly three years ago is no doubt still accurate:

First, it is a very natural human tendency for people to be hesitant and slow about preparing for tomorrow, even in their own private lives. Second, everyone hopes and prays and wishes that there will not be a third world war . . . Many simply wish themselves into the feeling that there won't be a war. And, third, some people feel that the destructiveness of atomic bombs will be so great that they become fatalistic and shrug their shoulders and say, "There isn't any use in doing anything about it."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hollifield's questioning of the District of Columbia's civil defense director on Mar. 6, 1956, brought out that Washington had no effective plan for shelter, evacuation, or mass care of evacuees.

<sup>18</sup> "An Interview With Governor Val Peterson," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September 1953, p. 239. Peterson insists that such fatalism is "very shortsighted." Although an attack on the 70 major metropolitan complexes in America would "bring tremendous chaos and . . . destruction. . . the country would not be destroyed—it could survive in one manner or another." "Obviously life would become very difficult, but . . . the effort to survive and fight back would be worth while."—Copyrighted interview in *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 8, 1955, p. 72.



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Some persons contend that the public's failure to demand a more effective civil defense program is not the result of apathy but of confusion. They maintain that the average citizen has been baffled by conflicting assertions on the nature and degree of the nuclear threat and by contradictory advice on ways to meet it. The resulting uncertainty makes him feel there is nothing he can do. According to one expert, "The public is simply not well enough informed to demand protection for itself."<sup>19</sup>

#### WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION ON NUCLEAR MATTERS

From time to time the charge is made that F.C.D.A. is handicapped—and the public in turn kept in the dark—by security regulations of the Atomic Energy Commission. Critics allege that A.E.C. usually discloses no new information until virtually forced to do so by conjecture and publicity stirred up by private analyses. Nearly a year passed between the Mar. 1, 1954, test of a thermonuclear device at Bikini, which revealed for the first time the nature and extent of the fallout danger, and the Feb. 15, 1955, A.E.C. announcement to the public.

Administrator Peterson told a Senate Armed Services subcommittee, Mar. 4, 1955, that "Classification made it extremely difficult for . . . [F.C.D.A.] to take effective steps to meet the threat of fallout." He said that classified fallout data could not be disclosed to employees of the Bureau of Public Roads or to certain workers in F.C.D.A. because they did not have so-called "Q" clearance—given on a "need-to-know" basis to persons concerned with atomic weapons. Peterson pointed out to a subcommittee of the congressional Joint Atomic Energy Committee, three weeks later, that his agency had been hampered by not being able to inform state and local authorities about the width of the fallout pattern and dosages of radioactivity.

A.E.C. Chairman Strauss, testifying before the Joint Atomic Energy subcommittee the same day, insisted that the information needed for civil defense planning had been "promptly conveyed" to the responsible officials in "either classified or declassified" form. He stated that F.C.D.A. officials had been given classified information on fallout as early as June and July of 1954.

<sup>19</sup> Willard Bascom, testimony before House Government Operations subcommittee, Feb. 8, 1956.



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The fallout experience emphasizes how advances in nuclear knowledge have forced changes in civil defense concepts. Disclosure of the fallout peril made evident the continuing need for some sort of shelter and also brought home the fact that use of nuclear weapons might have vital consequences for rural as well as urban populations.

Rapid development of new and more powerful nuclear weapons similarly has tended to make civil defense ideas obsolete before they could be implemented. The Project East River review committee, directing attention to the jump within a few years from kiloton to megaton bombs, pointed out that "The rate of advance in weapons and delivery systems has greatly exceeded the rate of progress in . . . non-military defenses." As Benjamin C. Taylor, acting director of F.C.D.A.'s engineering office, told the House subcommittee on Apr. 19: "We have been faced with the problem of planning protection . . . for the immediate future, and at the same time . . . for the more distant future, under the constantly changing potential of weapon design, attack pattern, and delivery capability."

#### DISAGREEMENT OVER DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The civil defense program has been handicapped also by disagreement over where the responsibility for civil defense should reside. The Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950 limited federal powers in the field largely to recommendation and guidance. Many persons, however, have come to the conclusion that the law enacted six years ago is already out of date. Gov. Harriman declared on June 22 that it was "absurd that we are today operating under the Civil Defense Act of 1950, which leaves primary responsibility to the states and the communities." Pointing out that "in six years many of the basic concepts of warfare have changed," Harriman insisted to the House subcommittee that survival of millions would depend on coordination and central planning of civil defense. Several months earlier another witness had termed treatment of civilian preparedness as a state and local problem "the greatest barrier to a satisfactory civil defense."<sup>20</sup>

The Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, reporting to President Eisenhower in June 1955, concluded that

<sup>20</sup> Merle A. Tuve, chairman of civil defense advisory committee of National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, testimony before House subcommittee, Feb. 8, 1956.

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civil defense responsibilities were "inappropriately defined and assigned." The commission said state and local governments had been made "primarily responsible for a function over which they are denied, by the realities of the problem, any significant degree of real policy formulation and technical leadership, and for which they are therefore unwilling to bear the preponderant financial burden."

Administrator Peterson observed on Mar. 24, 1955, that because a nuclear attack would hit people in their homes, "There must always be a very high degree . . . of participation in civil defense activities at the local level and on a voluntary basis." Critics of the concept of state and local responsibility point out at the same time that an attack on an American city would be an attack on the United States to be met by federal action. In the opinion of Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.), "To ask the states or local authorities to exercise primary responsibility [for civil defense] is as absurd as it would be to expect them to raise and support armies and the other modern weapons of defense."<sup>21</sup>

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## **Proposals to Strengthen Civil Defense**

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STRENGTHENING of the civil defense program depends mainly, most experts agree, on a quickening of public interest, a shift of planning and operations to a more realistic basis, and acceptance by the federal government of increased responsibility. To obtain widespread public support, it is held that a call to duty is necessary. A frank statement on the present status of civil defense preparations and a strong plea for public backing of a vastly more effective program—put to a nation-wide TV audience by the President himself—would be needed to produce maximum results.

### **METROPOLITAN AREAS AS MAJOR UNITS OF PLANNING**

Because megaton nuclear weapons can inflict disaster on an area which transcends city or even state boundaries, experts assert that civil defense plans and operations now

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<sup>21</sup> Hubert H. Humphrey, "To Provide for the Common Defense," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September 1955, p. 1168.

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should be geared to the metropolitan area. The Commission on Intergovernmental Relations recommended that the federal government modify the policy of carrying on civil defense through the states to the extent of allowing establishment of direct relations between Washington and critical metropolitan target zones not contained in a single state. The Project East River review committee proposed that the metropolitan target zone be "utilized as the basic unit for non-military defense planning and operations."

The latter concept was accepted as a desirable objective early this year by the Federal Civil Defense Administration, the Office of Defense Mobilization, and the Department of Defense. Administrator Peterson told the Holifield subcommittee in April that the survival plan studies now under way were having "a profound influence on . . . the concept of metropolitan area planning."

#### ENLARGEMENT OF THE FEDERAL ROLE IN CIVIL DEFENSE

The Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, in one of the few instances in which it favored greater centralization, recommended that Congress amend the Federal Civil Defense Act to make civil defense "a responsibility of the national government, with states and localities retaining an important supporting role." It reasoned that:

The civil defense problem does not arise out of internal conditions which the states can control, but is a direct outgrowth of relations between the United States and other nations. Civil defense is an integral part of our national defense. It is interstate in character. Its nature, scope, and severity need national planning and direction. An effective civil defense effort requires financial resources which the state and local governments are reluctant to make available because of their feeling that the national government should bear a large part of the burden. And if any one state fails to act, the default would do serious damage to other states and to the nation as a whole. The Commission is convinced that civil defense is a national responsibility, albeit one which the state and local governments must share, and to a large extent carry out.

Gov. Harriman proposed, June 22, that civil defense be made co-equal with military defense; that the Federal Civil Defense Administrator be given cabinet rank; that the Administrator be directed to draw up and put into force a comprehensive civil defense plan to be executed by federal, state, and regional civil defense authorities; and that the President be authorized to take command of state civil defense forces in time of war.

